

Gov. Evers: Goes all in for agriculture with \$50 million in relief for Wisconsin farmers, \$15 million food security initiative

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today announced the Wisconsin Farm Support Program, a \$50-million investment to provide direct payments to Wisconsin farmers in support of the agricultural sector during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a \$15-million Food Security Initiative to combat hunger in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin is a national agriculture leader, but COVID-19 has created unprecedented challenges for our farmers, food processors, and all those in the food supply chain. Federal aid so far has attempted to support agriculture nationwide, but Wisconsin farmers have been left out.

Eligible farmers will be asked to apply for the aid through the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, which is working in collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP). Farm support payments could begin arriving as early as June.

“Farmers have asked for help, and this direct aid is meant to aid the farmers who are the foundation of our food system. Farmers also serve as the backbone of many of Wisconsin’s local rural economies, and these direct payments will help revitalize local economies and jump-start Wisconsin’s food supply chain, which has been significantly disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic,” Gov. Evers said. “DATCP and I have engaged in productive meetings with agriculture stakeholders to ensure a fair,

accessible distribution system for these aid payments, and I look forward to getting this relief into the hands of farmers around the state.”

To complement the Wisconsin Farm Support Program and combat food insecurity, the governor has also committed \$15 million to the Food Security Initiative. A portion of the funding will go toward helping food banks, pantries, and other nonprofit organizations fighting food insecurity adapt to challenges posed by the COVID-19 public health crisis. This may include adjustments to public health and social distancing guidelines, such as curbside pick up or delivery services, purchasing prepared meals from local restaurants for distribution, as well as other expenses that are being incurred by these organizations as they continue to provide services to families in need. The initiative will emphasize the importance of prioritizing the use of Wisconsin products wherever possible in feeding citizens who find themselves in need of support. Applicants are strongly encouraged to partner with local food experts to aid in connecting with farmers in their area.

Additionally, the Food Security Initiative will help food banks, pantries, and other nonprofit organizations purchase, process, and/or store Wisconsin agricultural products for distribution to local consumers in need. Furthermore, these grants will bolster Wisconsin’s food supply chain by strengthening bridges, from producers and processors to food banks and consumers. This section of the Food Security Initiative will help ensure that the funding provided in the federal CARES Act goes to help Wisconsin organizations distribute nutritious Wisconsin food products to Wisconsin consumers who need them most. This initiative is a win-win for Wisconsin as it fights food insecurity while also investing in the agriculture industry, supporting Wisconsin’s food supply chain from farm to family. Successful applicants are encouraged to partner with organizations that work directly with Wisconsin’s agricultural producers and food processors to maximize the use of Wisconsin products.

“During this difficult time, people across our state don’t have enough to eat in a state that helps feed the entire country,” said Gov. Evers. “Connecting the dots between struggling food producers with organizations that are working to address food insecurity requires a coordinated effort—one that draws upon the ingenuity of our residents and their devotion to their neighbors and communities. Our farmers and agribusinesses have never wavered in their commitment to providing nutritious, high-quality food for folks here in Wisconsin and around the world. Now, we’re going all in together to support both Wisconsin’s agriculture industry and people in need throughout the state.”